

Permanent Storage of Vaccine in Dorm-style Refrigerators No Longer Allowed

In 2008-2009, CDC is requiring all VFC programs to work with their enrolled VFC providers to eliminate the use of dorm-style refrigerators as permanent storage units for VFC vaccine. Dorm-style refrigerators must be phased-out of currently enrolled VFC-provider offices. Effective immediately, all newly enrolling VFC providers cannot use a dorm-style refrigerator as a permanent storage unit for VFC vaccine. One of the main reasons that CDC is taking this action is due to the rising cost of VFC vaccine. As VFC vaccine cost approaches \$3 billion, it is essential for the integrity and continuation of the VFC program to ensure that VFC vaccine is stored in appropriate units which decrease the chance of vaccine loss due to inappropriate storage conditions. The problem with dorm-style refrigerators is that they place vaccine at a high risk of freezing.

A dorm-style refrigerator is a small combination refrigerator/freezer unit that is outfitted with one external door, an evaporator plate (cooling coil) which is usually located inside an ice-maker compartment (freezer) within the refrigerator, and is void of a temperature alarm device. Its temperature control sensor reacts to the temperature of the evaporator rather than the general air in the storage compartment. When the compressor is on, the evaporator cools to lower the temperature in the refrigerator, in most cases to below 0°C.

Dormitory-style refrigerators should only be used to store a clinic's single-day supply of **refrigerated** vaccines and these vaccines should be returned to the main refrigerator storage unit at the end of each clinic day. Dormitory-style refrigerators are not adequate for long-term or permanent storage of biological products because they do not maintain appropriate temperatures. **These units should never be used for storing Varicella-containing vaccines.** Providers must record the temps in the dorm-style refrigerator at the start of the day before placing vaccine in the unit and also when removing the vaccine at the end of the day. These temp logs need to be sent in monthly with the main units temp logs.

All VFC providers currently using dorm-style refrigerators as their permanent storage unit must plan to replace this refrigerator with a standard household refrigerator or a separate refrigerator and separate freezer unit by December 31, 2008. Please contact our office at (602) 364-3642 if your practice is not able to replace the dorm-style refrigerator by the end of December.

Monitoring Refrigerator/Freezer Temperatures

Refrigerator/freezer temperatures should never go unchecked for longer than 5 consecutive days because the viability of the vaccine can not be assured. If a provider office is going to be closed for longer than 5 consecutive days, contact the Vaccine Center at 602-364-3642 to inform our office about the arrangements that have been made to check the refrigerator/freezer temperatures twice daily or to return the vaccine to us during the office closure.

Vaccine will be removed from provider offices if temperature logs are submitted showing that the refrigerator/freezer temperatures were not checked and recorded for over 5 consecutive days.